



The Home Department

Conducted by
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Legend of the Star

As you sit beside the hearthstone,
Where we twain sat once, of old,
Listening to the Christmas stories—
Sweetest stories ever told!—
Do you mind how it perplexed us,
When they said, "In well unknown
Lies the lost star, while the Wise
Men
Sleep, in honor, in Cologne?"

God, we thought, should grandly
set it

High above the judgment seat,
That bright star that led the Magi
To the King of Israel's feet;
Like the sun, as Easter dawneth,
Should it shine upon the throne
Since the mortals that it guided
Sleep, in honor, in Cologne.

Ah, since then we twain have
listened

Other lips the story tell,
And have learned the bitter meaning
Of the lost star in the well.
Ne'er again shall it perplex us,
While the star must lie like stone
'Neath the waves, while those it
aided

Sleep, in honor, in Cologne.

—Anna C. Minogue.

The Christmas Spirit

To give gifts is the joy of the Christmas season; but we must not forget that the spirit of giving is of more importance than the gift bestowed. To give gladly, lovingly, though the gift be but a cheery word or brightening smile—that is the spirit of giving; to give generously, joyously, of "such as we have," though there be naught of silver or gold in the giving—that is the spirit of love—the spirit that came into the world with the blessed Christ Child. Every year, thousands of people give reluctantly, because it is a "duty" present, and because they consider the gift an obligation. Sometimes one hesitates to give, because the value of their gift must be small, or because they fear that the recipient will resent the giving. But Christmas should be a time of good fellowship, and every gift should take with it a sincere expression of friendship and good will.

The "Wise Men" followed the Star, with goodly gifts, and it led them to the Babe and His mother. So, today, the wise men, laden with goodly gifts, follow the Star, and it leads them to the babe and its mother—just as of old. And wise is the man who follows the Christmas Star? Yet there are thousands to whom the day brings no real cheer, because of loneliness; because for them, the bitterness of fate has left them stranded upon the desert of solitude, their gifts unclaimed. It is not poverty of purse that makes one really poor; for many who have all that money can buy are yet friendless, lonely, longing intensely for a little loving sympathy. There is many a lonely boy or girl, or adult spending their first Christmas, it may be, far from home, who would welcome a kindly touch of comradeship as more precious than gold. Let us try to brighten the sad lives about us with cheerful good will, and to each and all of our dear readers, the Home Department sends cordial greetings and good wishes, hoping the Christmas spirit may abide with them "forever and a day."

Some Christmas Customs

In some parts of England, there is quite a contest between the men

and women of the household as to whether the prickly or the smooth holly is first brought into the house on Christmas Eve, for the two kinds are called "he" and "she" respectively, and if the smooth holly is the first to enter the house, the mistress will be "master" for the coming year, and vice-versa. Similar superstitions once attached to the holly and the ivy, the holly being considered a masculine and the ivy, a feminine. Old songs refer to "Holly and his men," and "Ivy and her maids."

Girls who wish to know if they will marry in the coming year, should go out on Christmas Eve to the chicken house at the stroke of midnight and knock thrice at the door, listening carefully for the sound of any stir among the poultry. If the cock chances to crow, it is a sign of a wedding at hand, but if the hens only cackle, another twelvemonth of single blessedness awaits the listener.

When the holly and the ivy are taken down at Candlemas, girls throw them on the fire to see if their lovers will be faithful. If the withered branches burn with a clear flame and make a loud, crackling noise, the course of true love is supposed to run smoothly; but if they smoulder slowly, or the blaze dies out, the lover is growing cold and faithless.

Poverty of purse is not the saddest thing in this world. There are thousands in the world who are well fed, well housed and warm, yet friendless and alone—lonely for love, and bitter with continued loneliness through no fault of theirs. To them, who can measure the value of the smallest gift when given with a friendly smile? Many "fare sumptuously every day" in the lordly hall who would gladly share your frugal dinner for the sake of the companionship which all their wealth can not buy—the companionship of true, loving hearts.

Lessons of the Moon

A single halo around the moon indicates a storm; a double halo means boisterous weather. If the moon be bright and clear when three days old, fine weather is promised. A clear moon indicates frost; a dull moon means rain. If the moon changes with the wind in the east, then shall we have bad weather. If the moon looks high, cold weather may be expected; if the moon looks low, warm weather is promised. When the moon is visible in the day time, then we may expect cool days. If the new moon appear with its points upward, the month will be dry; if the points are downward, more or less rain may be expected during the next three weeks. When the points of the crescent of the new moon are very clearly visible, frost may be looked for. The new moon on her back always portends wet weather.

Toys and the Toy-Makers

It is said that it costs the people of America close on to twenty million dollars every year to fill the stockings at Christmas time. Yet very few know where the toys and articles intended for Christmas come from, or by whom made. Dolls for girls and soldier toys for boys are the leaders in popularity. The finest dolls come from France, and the manufacture is entirely in the hands

of a corporation representing a capital of many millions of dollars. Germany and Russia also manufacture dolls, and America does a little in the business. In France and other European countries, machinery is little used, and the hot liquid for the heads is ladled into lead or plaster molds. On this side of the ocean, the workman holds the mold in one hand, turns a faucet and allows the steaming mixture to rush into the cavity. It is very interesting to read of the various processes in the making of the dolls and toys. Soldier toys, or the belongings of the soldier as toys, are made in Germany and France, and the boy's chief delight is found in the possession of a gun. The oldest toy center is the thousand-year-old city of Nuremberg.

For the Toilet

Answering A. M.—For the cure of dandruff, here is a lotion which has been in successful use for a long time, and is said to have cured dandruff of long standing when other remedies have failed. It is poisonous, and must be kept out of careless hands and carefully labeled; but used externally, it is not harmful. Only the scalp should be wet with it, and for this, a glass medicine dropper, or a small machine oil can should be used, and it should be applied by a second person who can part the hair and put it immediately on the scalp. Dissolve ten grains of corrosive sublimate in five ounces of distilled witch hazel; apply every night, just enough to moisten the skin, rubbing it in with a bit of absorbent cotton to prevent its roughening the fingers. Some cases require only two twenty-five cent bottles, some only one; others require much more, and longer use. It does not injure, or stain or bleach the hair, and when the dandruff (which is a parasitic disease of the scalp) is cured, the hair will stop falling. A fine comb should not be used on the scalp, or any other comb which scratches.

Sometimes, this lotion falls; but there are several others which can be recommended. One dram each of powdered borax, sulphur, and glycerine, and eight ounces of rosewater. Apply this mixture freely every night. Another: Alcohol, two ounces, witch hazel, two ounces, resorcin, fifteen grains. Apply daily by rubbing into the scalp with the fingers.

"Buckwheat Shortcake"

Mrs. J. C. asks for a recipe for making buckwheat shortcake, and we copy the following from a recipe book for her:

Take three or four teacupfuls of nice, sour milk, one teaspoonful of soda dissolved in milk; if the milk is very sour, you must use soda in proportion, with a little salt; mix up a dough with buckwheat flour, thicker than you would mix the same for griddle cakes, say quite stiff; pour it into a buttered tin and put directly into the stove oven and bake for thirty minutes, or as you would a shortcake from common flour. It takes the place of the griddle cake, also the shortcake, in every sense of the word; nice with meat, butter, honey, molasses, etc. No shortening is used; if any is left, wet the top a little and warm it up for the next meal; it is just as good as when fresh. The author urges

every one to give it a trial, saying, from personal experience, that a dyspeptic can eat it, when no other warm bread could be tolerated. He also warns that sometimes, at the first trial, one may fail from the milk being too sour for the amount of soda used, or from making the dough too thin.

For Binding Papers

H. R. sends us the following: "If you wish to save your Commoners (which you certainly ought to do), purchase a ten-cent box of copper or hollow rivets, such as are used to mend straps or harness; lay the papers for two or three months together, evenly and smoothly, and punch several holes through them near the folded edge, or back. Insert the rivets and head them down. The holes may be punched with an awl, or wire nail, but a hollow punch will cost but ten cents, and is better. The numbers for one or two months, fastened together in this wise, will not so easily be destroyed, and at the end of the year can all be bound in one volume with a suitable protecting cloth back."

For the Laundry

To wash sweaters, sozzle the garment about in quite warm suds, squeezing and pressing with the hands until clean; then rinse thoroughly in the same way, using clear warm water. Do not hang the sweater up, but lay it on a perfectly clean, flat surface—a little slanting, if possible, to drain the water off; turn the garment frequently as it dries; or, fasten a cloth by the four corners to some supports, and swing the sweater in that, leaving it to drip dry, with plenty of air. Washed and dried in this manner, it will keep its shape. The same method may be pursued with other knit or crocheted goods.

When ironing, instead of the iron triquet or stand generally used for depositing the iron when not in use, use a clean, heated brick, and the flatiron will retain its heat much longer.

When washing napkins, after they are clean, rinse well and then dip in boiling clear water, wring out at once, and with a very hot iron, go over them at once. They will be stiff as new goods. Table linen and napkins are best washed by themselves, setting a time aside for that purpose.

To relieve the hands after washing, of the drawn, wrinkled feeling the alkali gives them, there is nothing better than common, household vinegar. If the lye has eaten into the hands, or if chapped by exposure to the air, the immediate effect of the vinegar will be painful; but it will last but a moment, and will leave the hands soft and white, after which a very little mutton or other fat may be well rubbed in. Oil or fat has a tendency to redden the hands if applied without first washing the hands with the vinegar to kill the alkali.

Some Good Cake Recipes

White Fruit Cake—Cream well half a cupful of butter, and add one cupful of sugar and cream again; add the stiffly beaten whites of six eggs, then, alternately, two cupfuls of sifted flour and one cupful of milk. Beat well for ten minutes; add one heaping teaspoonful of baking powder, half a pound of seeded raisins, half a pound of chopped figs, one pound of grated coconut, one-fourth pound of citron cut fine, and one-half pound of almond kernels, blanched and cut into strips. After blending well, bake in one, or two, pans in a moderate oven for two hours.

Marshmallow Cake—One cupful of butter, two cupfuls of sugar, one